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TO ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE  
INFO RUEHML/AMEMBASSY MANILA IMMEDIATE 8703  
RUEHGO/AMEMBASSY RANGOON IMMEDIATE 7746  
RHMFISS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE  
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 STATE 122937

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [EAID](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [ASEAN](#) [ARF](#) [RP](#)  
SUBJECT: ARF DISASTER RELIEF EXERCISE GUIDANCE AND ACTION  
REQUESTS

REF: A. STATE 112442 B. STATE 106079

¶1. (U) This is an ACTION REQUEST for Embassies BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, BANGKOK, BEIJING, CANBERRA, COLOMBO, DHAKA, DILI, HANOI, ISLAMABAD, JAKARTA, KUALA LUMPUR, MOSCOW, NEW DELHI, OTTAWA, PHNOM PENH, PORT MORESBY, SEOUL, SINGAPORE, TOKYO, ULAANBAATAR, USEU BRUSSELS, VIENTIANE, and WELLINGTON. Embassies MANILA and RANGOON are info. Please slug for POL and relevant Department of Defense and USAID offices in embassies.

SUMMARY  
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¶2. (SBU) In order to advance a number of regional security objectives in East Asia, the United States is closely supporting the Philippines in its role as host of the first ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) Disaster Relief Exercise, set to take place May 4-8, 2009 in the Philippines. All 27 ARF members will be invited to participate in the exercise, termed a Voluntary Demonstration of Response (VDR). Initially and up through the May 2009 exercise, embassies are asked to engage in a sustained effort with host government officials to ensure strong and appropriate participation. (Note: The Philippines has distributed a list of civil-military capabilities requested from ARF governments.) At post's discretion or if requested per para 4, posts should approach host governments at a senior level regarding their participation. Background on U.S. strategic objectives, the exercise concept, timeline, funding assistance and human rights vetting issues are outlined below. END SUMMARY.

OBJECTIVES  
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¶3. (SBU) The Department requests the embassies in para 1 to pursue the following objectives. Please complete these actions by December 2 in order to support VDR timelines and the success of the activity:

--Identify and report on a working-level POC at post to coordinate embassy engagement with host governments on their participation in the VDR and associated planning meetings through May 2009.

--Contact the local Philippines embassy in the host country (ULAANBAATAR excepted) to gain insight into their own bilateral discussions with host governments regarding the Philippines-issued invitations to the VDR. If feasible, posts are encouraged to coordinate future host government interactions on the VDR with Philippines' embassy officials.

--Inquire with appropriate host government officials about their government's notional level and type of participation in the VDR and express USG support for host government participation.

--Inform appropriate host government officials that U.S. and Philippines' VDR exercise planners will be available to further discuss the VDR and ARF members' participation at the upcoming

December 4-6 ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting (ISM) on Disaster Relief in Banda Aceh, Indonesia.

--Inform host government officials from eligible developing countries that funding requests, if requested by the embassy and host government officials, for participating civil and military agencies may be available in accordance with the procedures explained in para 11.

--(If Asked) Inform host governments that Leahy Vetting is not required by the USG for VDR participants. (see para 12 for details).

--(For TOKYO and CANBERRA only) Request that host governments identify any potential funding assistance they may offer to developing countries as discussed in the Trilateral Strategic Dialogue (see para 14).

14. (SBU) The Department requests embassies in para 1 to pursue the following objectives by December 31 and, if necessary, beyond this date:

--Maintain active engagement with host government interagency in order to maximize prospects for their participation in and knowledge about the VDR.

--Work with host government officials to identify specific niche, civil-military capabilities host governments wish to offer as their

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contribution to the VDR and which they would discuss at the January 19-23 ARF Multinational VDR Planning Conference in Manila.

--(BANGKOK, BEIJING, CANBERRA, NEW DELHI, TOKYO, SEOUL, and SINGAPORE only) Encourage, at a senior level, strong host government civil-military participation in the VDR given their experience and capacity as major assisting nations in regional humanitarian relief operations.

REPORTING DEADLINE, POC, and BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS  
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15. (U) Posts are requested to report back on initial actions taken by December 2 and subsequently as necessary throughout the exercise planning process. POCs for any questions, additional background are:

--State EAP/RSP Kevin Sheives (sheiveskw@state.gov, 202-647-1217)  
--PACOM J71 Steve Mellinger (steve.mellinger@pacom.mil, 808-477-8238)  
--USAID/OFDA Jeff Hensel (jeff.hensel@ofda.gov, 808-477-9641)

16. (SBU) Copies of the exercise supporting documents with further background have been distributed by State Department country desks. They can also be accessed via the State Department Intranet website: <http://eap.state.gov/EAPOffices/RSP/ARF.cfm>. These documents for embassy background only include:

--a brief for USG interagency officials only,  
--list of ARF meeting participants that received an October 9, 2008 brief on the exercise  
--the October 9, 2008 brief on the exercise given to all countries in ARF  
--a copy of the official Philippines-issued invitation and information paper

BACKGROUND  
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17. (SBU) STRATEGIC U.S. OBJECTIVES: As a co-sponsor for the VDR, the U.S. hopes to accomplish a variety of regional security objectives through this exercise and the broad participation of ARF members. These strategic objectives are to:

--Provide a major deliverable for strengthening ARF to become a more relevant, credible, and action-oriented institution.

--Build regional and Philippines' humanitarian assistance capacity and civil-military interoperability for major, multinational relief

operations.

--Highlight major power military cooperation in Southeast Asia to dampen the perception of a zero-sum competition for influence in the region.

--Provide actual care to local populations in the Philippines either affected by a recent disaster or in underdeveloped areas.

¶8. (U) EXERCISE CONCEPT: Following remarks by Secretary Rice and Philippines Foreign Secretary Romulo at the July 24, 2008 ARF Ministerial, ARF Foreign Ministers agreed to conduct an ARF multinational disaster relief exercise, termed Voluntary Demonstration of Response (VDR). As host nation, the Philippines in mid-November, 2008 sent invitations to the remaining 26 members of ARF. Through USPACOM, OFDA, and State Department, the United States is heavily supporting the Philippines and ARF in the VDR's conceptual development, planning, funding, and execution. In coordination with the Philippines as host nation, participating countries will provide niche, civil-military capabilities to deploy during the May 4-8 exercise in response to the natural disaster scenario in Central Luzon described by the supporting exercise documents (see para 6). ARF countries should try to identify which specific capabilities they may be able to deploy for the VDR. For some ARF countries, observer status may correspond to their level of interest or capacity.

¶9. (U) EMBASSY ROLES: As laid out in the Philippines-issued invitations, the specific capabilities that each ARF nation provides will be approved and de-conflicted bilaterally between each participating nation and the Philippines in advance of and during the VDR planning conferences. Identification by host governments of specific capabilities prior to the January 19-23 multinational planning conference will be critical to the success of the process, including de-conflicting those capabilities with those offered by other participants. The identification of planning requirements and the availability of these capabilities may be difficult for some countries. Embassies are requested to assist host governments in identifying these requirements and facilitate host government participation in the VDR.

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¶10. (U) VDR TIMELINE:

--October 9, 2008: All ARF countries received a briefing by the Philippines on major exercise details during an ARF Inter-Sessional Group Meeting (ref A). (Note: List of meeting participants and sample brief found via para 6.)  
--Mid-November, 2008: Through diplomatic correspondence, the Philippines invited all 27 ARF members to the VDR and associated planning meetings.  
--December 5-6, 2008: U.S. and Philippines exercise planners will be available on the margins of the ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting (ISM) on Disaster Relief in Banda Aceh, Indonesia to answer questions and discuss ARF nations' participation.  
--January 19-28, 2009: Multinational Initial Planning Conference (Manila) and Initial Site Survey (Central Luzon).  
--March 9-18, 2009: Multinational Final Planning Conference (Manila) and Final Site Survey (Central Luzon)  
--May 4-8, 2009: Multinational ARF VDR Exercise (Central Luzon).

¶11. (SBU) FUNDING PROCESS: The exercise will be self-funded by each participating country. USPACOM has requested Combatant Commander Initiative Funds (CCIF) (under \$1 million) which could cover military assistance for Title Ten-eligible developing countries participating in the VDR. In addition, State EAP has set aside limited funds (roughly \$50k of Economic Support Funds (ESF)) for assistance for civilian participation from ESF-eligible developing countries (Note: Please contact EAP/RSP POC if you have questions regarding the eligibility of your countries). If host governments would like to request CCIF or ESF funding, they need to inform USEMB staff (Political and military assistance sections) of their request and expected needs. For funding and travel assistance for their participation in the (what do we mean by required? January and March planning conferences (which participants are expected to attend), USEMB staff should inform the para 5 POCs by December 19, 2008 of the request. For funding and travel assistance for the May 4-8, 2009 VDR

exercise itself, USEMB staff should inform the para 5 POCs by February 27, 2009. (Note: The United States is also discussing with Japan and Australia their possible funding assistance to developing countries. See para 14)

¶12. (U) VETTING: Security force participants in the various VDR planning and exercise activities do not need to be vetted under applicable DOD or State Leahy vetting requirements. The VDR and planning meetings leading up to it are multilateral exercise activities rather than training events. As the VDR is a multilateral exercise and not training, military participants (self-funded or funded through CCIF) do not require vetting under DoD Leahy requirements, and do not trigger State Leahy vetting requirements. State ESF funds will not be used to support either military or law enforcement participants and thus participants who benefit from State funding do not fall under applicable vetting requirements for the use of foreign assistance funds.

¶13. (SBU) LEGAL AND POLICY ISSUES: The Philippines, as host, has issued invitations to Burma and DPRK as they did to other ARF countries. These countries will work out their participation bilaterally with the Philippines. The Philippine government is aware of U.S. policy concerns regarding the participation of Burma and the DPRK. We expect that Burma and DPRK, if they choose to participate, will join the exercise as observers. In addition, the U.S. has legal concerns in regards to China's military participation. The United States will work bilaterally with China to ensure the military capabilities provided by China are consistent with Department of Defense policy.

¶14. (U) (TOKYO and CANBERRA only): Through the Trilateral Strategic Dialogue (TSD), the United States has encouraged both Japan and Australia to offer a robust contribution to the ARF exercise to enable their participation in the exercise. We hope Australia and Japan would be able to determine potential funding assistance by mid-December (ref B). If Australia and Japan are able to provide assistance, the United States will refer funding requests to them as needs are made known to U.S. embassies. We would then ask Japan or Australia to coordinate bilaterally with the requesting countries.

¶15. (U) Department greatly appreciates posts' assistance in this matter.  
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